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SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE FOR AMBASSADOR TAHIR-KHELI (MAR 9-19)

REF: STATE 17010

**¶1.** American Embassy Islamabad warmly welcomes and grants country clearance for the visit of Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State for Women's Empowerment to Pakistan from March 9-March 19. The purpose of visit is to meet with Pakistani officials, politicians, and members of civil society on issues of women's empowerment. Details on hotel arrangements and meeting requests will be sent in a subsequent email.

**¶2.** Control Officer for the visit will be Political Officer Divya Swamy. Ms. Swamy's contact information is as follows: Embassy: 92-51-208-2921, Mobile: 92-300-501-8813, Email: SwamyDL@state.gov. The Embassy's main switchboard number is: 92-51-208-0000 and can be reached 24 hours a day.

**¶3.** **Visas:** Everyone arriving in Pakistan must/must have a valid visa. If you do not have a valid visa, you will be denied entry.

**¶4.** **Hotel Security:** Islamabad and the three constituent consulates in Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar are high-threat posts. Employees assigned to Pakistan are unaccompanied and receive danger pay. The Department of State Travel Warning for Pakistan asks U.S. citizens to defer non-essential travel to Pakistan because of the continued high security concerns about terrorists in Pakistan. The Embassy approves only essential official travel to Pakistan. All official visitors to Islamabad must adhere to Embassy security standards and procedures. The potential for continued threats to Americans in Pakistan from Al-Qaida and other extremist elements remains real. A suicide bomber killed two Consulate employees at the U.S. Consulate in Karachi in March 2006. A grenade attack against the Protestant International Church in Islamabad killed two Embassy members and injured several others in March 2002. American, Western, and Christian targets continue to be threatened and attacked. Anti-Americanism remains strong among certain elements of the population.

**¶5.** **Public Transportation:** for safety reasons, Americans are prohibited from using taxis and all public transportation.

**¶6.** **Health:** The Embassy Health Unit has provided the following information to aid visitors and temporary duty employees in Pakistan:

**¶A.** **Facilities:** There are health units at the embassy and each of the three consulates. The Islamabad Health unit is staffed by a Regional Medical Officer, a Foreign Service Nurse Practitioner and two RNs. It provides routine medical care and basic laboratory services during the workweek. It does not supply medications for chronic medical conditions; these must be brought with you. The facilities in Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar are extremely limited in the services they provide and are staffed by part-time local medical providers. Official visitors traveling to or working at

those locations should bring all personal medicines with them including over-the-counter drugs.

**IB. Access:** Access to the Health Units at all Mission Pakistan posts other than good samaritan, care is limited to American citizen employees and contractors who are eligible for Health Unit services. Good samaritan care is emergency care designed to stabilize a patient until s/he can reach or be reached by local medical practitioners.

**IC. Food and Water-borne Illnesses:** Visitors to Pakistan are at high risk for water-borne and gastrointestinal illnesses. Careful attention to the choice of food and beverages helps to reduce the risks. Avoid salad bars and buffets while eating at local restaurants; a la carte items are your safest bet. Meat, eggs, and vegetables should always be thoroughly cooked or steamed. Safe foods include steaming hot dishes, rice, pasta, cooked vegetables served hot, and bread products. Foods that are moist and served at room temperature, especially peeled fruits, salads, sauces, egg-based foods, mayonnaise-based dishes and buffet offerings are risky. Avoid ice cream as well.

**ID. Drinks:** Safe drinks include hot tea, coffee, and carbonated beverages. Assume all tap water is contaminated contrary to notices occasionally posted in some hotels or elsewhere. The only exception to this rule is the tap water on the embassy compound. Commercially available water bottled in Pakistan has been found to be inconsistently safe for consumption. Bottled water sold in our commissary has been judged safe. Be sure the seals have not been broken. Remember that freezing does not make water safe, so avoid ice cubes unless you know they have been made from potable water. Personal portable water purification systems are available commercially at nominal cost and can easily be transported in luggage as they are no larger than a tall mug. These devices protect against bacteria as well as viruses and protozoa.

**IE. Malaria:** Malaria is endemic to various regions in Pakistan, and the risks of infection vary depending on location, altitude and season. During the rainy season all visitors are advised to take prophylaxis, especially those traveling outside the major metropolitan centers or who make frequent trips between the consulates and Embassy. Mefloquine is the preferred prophylaxis and should be brought with you during travel as it is unavailable in country except at the mission health units. Doxycycline is an alternative and is available in country. In conjunction with medication, visitors must also take measures to reduce contact with mosquitoes, such as wearing clothing that covers most of the body and using an insect repellent containing DEET.

**IF. Immunizations:** Visitor immunization records should be reviewed by the Department's Immunization Clinic prior to departure. For short-term visitors the following immunizations are recommended: hepatitis a, hepatitis b, typhoid, and tetanus in addition to usual childhood immunizations. The rabies series is also recommended for Pakistan and should be completed before arriving in country. The Health Unit in Islamabad can provide most vaccinations except smallpox, which is only available in Washington. The consulate health units can provide a limited number of vaccinations depending on type needed and health unit staffing.

**IH. Emergency Medical Services:** Emergency medical care is extremely limited in Pakistan even in major cities. The health units keep up-to-date lists of available facilities in cities in which the embassy and consulates are located. Travelers should arrange for medical evacuation insurance either personally or through their sponsoring agency prior to their arrival in country.

**II. Automobile and Pedestrian Safety:** Overseas automobile accidents remain a major cause of death of expatriates abroad and Pakistan is no exception. Further, vehicles in Pakistan are driven on the left side of the road, which adds another dimension to automobile and pedestrian safety if you are not

used to this traffic pattern. Avoid driving at night if at all possible. Use seat belts in both rear and front seats, and insist that your driver maintains a safe speed. Stay alert crossing streets and intersections, especially after dark.

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